

DATE/TIME: March 20, 2008 8:00am-12:00pm FILE CODE: 0710215 –US 31 Hamilton County

LOCATION: St. Vincent Hospital

SUBJECT: Community Advisory Committee Meeting #3

ATTENDEES: CAC Members

NOTES BY: US 31 Hamilton County Project Team

**PURPOSE:** To introduce the CAC members to the alternatives under consideration for three interchanges along the US 31 Hamilton County corridor, and to update the members on the project status.

**DISCUSSION:** The US 31 Hamilton County project team addressed why US 31 mainline can not be a fully depressed corridor due to policy issues, current environmental regulations and hydraulic impacts associated with the water table. The team stated that US 31 Hamilton County will be depressed as much as possible without going lower than the water table. The team then introduced preliminary designs for three more interchanges. Engineering and environmental impact concerns were discussed for each interchange alternative and a brief discussion took place after each interchange presentation. CAC members shared their thoughts on pros and cons about each interchange alternative. Context Sensitive Solution (CSS) imaging results were revealed in addition to pedestrian access/trail location preferences.

**ACTIONS:** CAC members were asked to share comments, concerns, and questions with the US 31 project team members.

**Meeting Overview:** The third Community Advisory Committee meeting was held on Thursday, March 20, 2008 at St. Vincent Hospital in Carmel. Almost 50 community members and US 31 Hamilton County project team members were in attendance.

**General Information:**

- Jennifer Dzwonar, public outreach lead, opened the meeting with a welcome.
- She briefly gave an overview of the day's agenda stating its focus on the mainline profile and three interchanges – SR 38, 136<sup>th</sup> Street, and 116<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Steve Fleming, project manager, addressed a question posed by a CAC member which stated "What are the specific issues regarding drainage that lead to the conclusion to eliminate depressing US 31 at the 131<sup>st</sup> Street interchange? What alternatives might be employed to overcome these deficiencies? What are the specific impacts that would result if the roadway were to be depressed?"
- Steve answered the question with the response of "We are lowering US 31 as much as we can, given gravity flow. Let's look at the overall profile and issues related to lowering the road. A key drainage outlet is located at 131<sup>st</sup> St."
- Steve then introduced Dennis Lee with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) who confirmed that they would approve of depressing the roadway until it reaches the water table, but not to a point that would require pumping. The entire roadway structure must be above the water table.

- Dennis stated that FHWA can not allow construction of a roadway on the National Highway System that could have the potential to flood because of the associated maintenance and safety concerns.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION:

- Steve further explained the existing constraints along the mainline profile, such as gas lines and drainage constraints.
- Jill Hoffmann then presented environmental impacts if the road were to be taken below the water table.
- Jill said Hamilton County has done an excellent job of recognizing its stormwater challenges related to the development of much of the land from rural to urban.
- Dennis added that pumping affects soil stability and can threaten the foundations of buildings in surrounding areas where pumping occurs.

Preliminary Interchange – SR 38

- Dale Schmidt, a lead designer, introduced the one proposed design for the SR 38 interchange.
- US 31 will go over SR 38 because SR 38 is already slightly depressed.
- This will be the first interchange built, in approximately 2011, due to the relative simplicity of constructing this interchange and the high number of fatalities associated with the current intersection.
- There are a number of constraints associated with this interchange and that is why there is only one alternative. The constraints are Lindley Farm to the southwest and McGregor Park to the northeast.
- Jason Hignite discussed the environmental impacts at this interchange. He also went into further detail about Section 106 and 4f resources and that if there is a “prudent and reasonable” alternative that avoids such a resource (e.g. historical property, park land) then that option must be used.
- Impacts in this area include residential, stream and wetland, and access to the historic property.

Preliminary Interchange – 136<sup>th</sup> Street

- Travis Falls presented two alternatives for the 136<sup>th</sup> Street interchange. US 31 would go over 136<sup>th</sup> Street in both alternatives to reduce impacts to both surrounding development and wetlands.
- The first alternative Travis explained was the tight diamond. The second alternative consists of two roundabouts, also called a “dogbone” configuration. Alternative 2 appears to minimize environmental and traffic impacts.
- Jason explained that potential impacts are residential, a medical office building, and wetland and stream sites.
- The question was asked about the decision process for selecting alternatives. Steve responded by saying that safety and traffic level of service are the most important, but environmental impacts, costs, thoroughfare plans, and construction ease are all taken into consideration.
- The construction timeline is still being determined. With the Keystone Avenue project and state funding, the interchanges may get shuffled around.
- Pros and cons from the CAC members were then collected and discussed.
- The CAC members then had a small discussion about emergency vehicle movement through the roundabouts regarding safety and response time. A Carmel Fire Department representative said roundabouts have not increased their response time.

#### Preliminary Interchange – 116<sup>th</sup> Street

- Steve Swango, a lead designer, presented the alternatives for 116<sup>th</sup> Street by first discussing the advantages of US 31 as an overpass. He explained the benefits of this overpass which include:
  - It allows for more alternatives to be studied.
  - It would avoid retaining wall obstructions adjacent to the property line.
  - It would avoid steep grades on 116<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - It would allow for 116<sup>th</sup> Street to be reconstructed without closure.
- He also mentioned that the water table is an issue in this area and that traffic counts during peak hours are very high along 116<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Alternative one is a tight diamond. It provides for driver ease and is flexible for expansion; however it has the disadvantage of closely spaced signalized intersections.
- Alternative two is a teardrop roundabout. This type of interchange allows for continuity for 116<sup>th</sup>, familiarity to locals, and can typically accommodate close intersection spacing. However, it would not be easy to expand later, would be unfamiliar to out-of-towners, and is not as pedestrian friendly.
- Alternative three is a single point urban interchange (SPUI). A SPUI would allow for the least amount of right-of-way and displacements; however it is not easily expandable, is the least pedestrian friendly, and traffic movement could be a problem between the interchange and Pennsylvania Street.
- Steve also mentioned an option to provide a slip ramp to Old Meridian in order to help alleviate congestion at 116<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania Street.
- Environmental impacts as presented by Jason include a commercial property, but little else, given the amount of manmade drainage in the area.
- Pros and cons from the CAC members were then collected and discussed.
- The CAC members then brought about much discussion relating to pedestrian safety and an actual need at 116<sup>th</sup> Street. It was mentioned that a multiuse trail would be installed at 111<sup>th</sup> Street and 126<sup>th</sup> Street which would have no interaction with US 31 traffic. It was decided that trails and pedestrian access at 116<sup>th</sup> Street would be studied in more detail.

#### Context Sensitive Solutions

- Jonathan Mooney spoke about the results from the image preference study.
- Jonathan then discussed pedestrian connections and showed a map with all proposed pedestrian crossings on US 31 Hamilton County.
- Jonathan asked for volunteers for a focus group that would take a deeper look at these connections and the placement of them along each east/west connection.
- He then explained the current preferred side of the road for each trail connection and how these were being sited based on available trail plans.
- The Monon/Midland connection was also introduced to the group and that the connections to this system are still being evaluated.

#### Conclusion:

- Meeting attendees were asked to submit their comments and concerns about environmental, traffic, and planning factors – on comment cards, via email, via follow-up meetings – for the US 31 Team to take into consideration.
- The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.